WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A processing unit connectable to a communications network, said processing unit having a data carrier reader operable to read a network identity from a portable data carrier, said processing unit being operable on being powered up to check for the presence of a said data carrier, and, when a said data carrier is present, to use the network identity from said data carrier for communicating via the network.

2. The processing unit of Claim 1, wherein the processing unit is operable, on detecting the absence of a said data carrier, to prevent access to said network.

3. The processing unit of Claim 2, wherein the processing unit is operable, on detecting the absence of a said data carrier, to record a fault condition.

4. The processing unit of Claim 2, wherein the processing unit is operable, on detecting the absence of a said data carrier, to terminate its power-up sequence.

5. The processing unit of Claim 1, wherein the data carrier is a memory card and said data carrier reader is a memory card reader.

6. The processing unit of Claim 1, wherein said data carrier is a smart card and said data carrier reader is a smart card reader.

7. The processing unit as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said data carrier reader includes a securing mechanism to hinder removal of said data carrier when present in said reader.

8. The processing unit of Claim 1, wherein said processing unit is replaceably mountable in a carrier.

9. The processing unit of Claim 7, wherein the carrier is a rack.

10. The processing unit of Claim 1, wherein said processing unit is a rack-mountable computer server.

11. A computer server system comprising a communications network for providing data communications to devices connected to said network, and at least one processing unit connectable to a communications network, said processing unit having a data carrier reader operable to read a network identity from a portable data carrier, said processing unit being operable on being powered up to check for the presence of a said data carrier, and when a said data carrier is present to use the network identity from said data carrier for communicating via the network.

12. A method of operating a processing unit connected to a communications network, said processing unit having a data carrier reader for reading a data carrier carrying a network identity for use in communicating via said network; the method comprising the processing unit, on being powered up:
    - checking for the presence of a said data carrier; and
    - when a data carrier is present, using the network identity from the data carrier for communicating via the network.

13. The method of claims 12, comprising the processing unit, on detecting the absence of a said data carrier, preventing access to said network.

14. The method of Claim 13, wherein the processing unit, on detecting the absence of a said data carrier, records a fault condition.

15. The method of Claim 13, wherein the processing unit, on detecting the absence of a said data carrier, terminates its power-up sequence.

16. The method of Claim 12, comprising a user manually providing a said data carrier carrying a said network identity to said data carrier reader to prior to powering up the processing unit.

22

17. The method of Claim 16, wherein the data carrier is a memory card.

18. The method of Claim 16, wherein said data carrier is a smart card.

19. The method of Claim 16, further comprising securing said data carrier with respect to said data carrier reader.

20. The method of Claim 12, wherein said processing unit is replaceable, and the step of connecting a processing unit to a computer network comprises:
- disconnecting a first processing unit from said communications network, and
- connecting a second replacement processing unit to said communications network in place of said first processing unit.

21. A portable data carrier configured to be removably inserted in a data reader of a processing unit connectable to a communications network, the data carrier carrying a network identity for the processing unit to use for communicating via the network, the data carrier being readable by processing unit on being powered up when the data carrier is present, whereby the network identity from the data carrier is used by the processing unit for communicating via the network.

22. The data carrier of Claim 21 in the form of a memory card.

23. The data carrier of Claim 21 in the form of a smart card.

24. A carrier medium carrying program code for a processing unit connected to a communications network, said processing unit having a data carrier reader for reading a data carrier carrying a network identity for use in communicating via said network; the program code being operable, when the processing unit is powered up:
- to check for the presence of a said data carrier; and
- when a data carrier is present, to use the network identity from the data carrier for communicating via the network.

23